



City of Seattle
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

PRESS RELEASE

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Mayor's Economic Opportunity Task Force releases recommendations to continue economic growth

SEATTLE – Mayor Greg Nickels convened his Economic Opportunity Task Force (EOTF) today to receive their second set of recommendations on ways to continue to improve the business climate and grow the jobs base in Seattle.

“We are creating jobs and economic opportunity by working to make Seattle a good place to do business,” Nickels said. “Now it’s time to address some of the underlying issues that face our economy now and in the future: transportation, education and affordable housing.”

A number of the Task Force recommendations focus on transportation, affordable housing, simplifying the land use code, education and workforce development issues.

“I thank the EOTF members for partnering with the City to continue to build for the future,” said Nickels. “We need to keep working together to ensure all Seattle residents benefit from the jobs and opportunities created by our growing economy.”

“The mayor has focused on supporting job growth in some of Seattle’s key industries, such as manufacturing and healthcare,” said Steve Williamson, Executive Secretary of the King County Labor Council and Task Force Co-Chair. “We need to make sure our workforce is prepared for these jobs and the needs of our local industries into the future.”

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“The city responded aggressively in response to our first recommendations,” said Kay Hirai, Owner, Studio 904 and Task Force Co-chair. “With this set of recommendations, we are asking the city again to help facilitate improvements that benefit not just big business, but also small businesses and local communities throughout our city.”

“The city’s economic outlook is much brighter than in 2002 when I first convened this Task Force, but we must continue to meet new challenges and opportunities to secure our economic future,” Mayor Nickels said.

“Our recommendations this time are broader and perhaps more challenging,” said Joe Quintana, Managing Partner of IndexGroup, a Seattle-based strategic communications consulting firm, and Task Force Co-Chair. “But we know that our focus on transportation, affordable housing and education are shared by the mayor as priorities for his second term.”

This second set of recommendations builds on the EOTF’s 2002 recommendations and the foundation laid by the city and its regional partners towards a more vibrant, balanced and diversified economy. The EOTF’s current focus includes strategies to reduce disproportionality in economic opportunity and to promote sustained economic growth so that all city residents can prosper.

The EOTF formed four subcommittees to focus their efforts and interests in the broad subject areas of land use, housing and neighborhood revitalization; expanding the city’s jobs base; economic opportunity; and transportation and infrastructure. A summary of the key recommendations follow:

Land Use, Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization

- Streamline the city’s interdepartmental permitting process;
- Create new finance and process incentives for affordable workforce housing development;
- Increase police presence and public safety resources in neighborhood business districts.

Expanding the City’s Job Base

- Convene a Mayor’s Education Summit to make Seattle more competitive in attracting talent and a better prepared workforce;
- Establish industry-specific advisory committees to address current issues impacting these industries;
- Continue to improve the city’s permitting process to support new and emerging industries.

Economic Opportunity

- Enhance collaboration between workforce development stakeholders to better meet employer needs, improve service delivery and attract funding.

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Transportation & Infrastructure

- Support the development of a regional transportation package that sustains and enhances key transportation needs;
- Address major maintenance backlog through concurrent city initiatives for dedicated and increased local transportation funding;
- Improve city permitting and coordination of transportation projects.

The Mayor created the Economic Opportunity Task Force, the 39-member group of business, labor, education and community leaders, in March, 2002. The Task Force issued 69 recommendations for ways the city could re-invigorate Seattle's economy and expand its job base in July, 2002, focusing on transportation, simplifying the land use code and implementing economic development programs for distressed business districts. Their recommendations helped shape the city's economic agenda for the mayor's first term.

The city has completed or made substantial progress on over 80% (60 out of 69) of the original recommendations as of June, 2005. Some highlights of the three-year report of June, 2005, included \$2 Billion in State funding for the Alaskan Way Viaduct; reducing permit review times; \$8 Million in infrastructure improvements for the U-District; the launch of the Southeast Seattle Action Agenda; and instilling customer service culture in city government with such services as the Mayor's Business Advocate and Industrial Permit Liaison.

To learn more about the Economic Opportunity Task Force and the mayor's efforts to improve Seattle's business climate, visit the mayor's website at www.seattle.gov/mayor.

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